

Ohio State Embracing Underdog Mentality Entering Peach Bowl



For the first time this season, Ohio State will serve as the underdog when the Buckeyes take on No. 1 Georgia in the Peach Bowl on Dec. 31.

In fact, it's the first time Ohio State will serve in the underdog role since the 2021 College Football Playoff National Championship against Alabama — a game in which OSU lost 52-24. Despite the loss, the Buckeyes have won eight of their last 10 matchups in which they've embraced being the underdog and will have to do so again when they take on the Bulldogs at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. Ohio State currently sits as the 6.5-point underdog against Georgia, according to DraftKings.

Linebacker Steele Chambers said head coach Ryan Day has instilled an underdog mentality within the Buckeyes by pointing to past Ohio State teams that exceeded expectations despite not being favored.

"Right before practice, Coach Day was talking about the former national championship teams," Chambers said. "He was talking about 2002, they were underdogs to Miami. In 2014, they weren't expected to get into (the playoff), but they got in with the fourth seed.

"Just playing with that underdog mentality, that chip on your shoulder, that can really help a team," he continued. "I think that's what we're starting to develop. We can see it in practice, people are getting really chippy."

As Chambers mentioned, Ohio State entered the BCS National Championship game in the 2003 Fiesta Bowl as 13-point underdogs to the Hurricanes before stunning Miami (FL) 31-24 in double overtime. In 2014, The Buckeyes needed a 59-0 drubbing of Wisconsin in the Big Ten Championship to squeak into the playoff — where they were also underdogs against Alabama in the Sugar Bowl and Oregon in the CFP National Championship, winning both games and claiming OSU's most recent national title.

Although Day has taken a historical approach with his team, regarding their status as underdogs, defensive end Zach Harrison said that the underdog notion hasn't crossed his mind all that much in the lead-up to the Peach Bowl.

"We don't look at that too much," Harrison said. "That's out of our control, whether who thinks who is going to win. We always think we're going to win, and I'm sure every other team in the country always thinks they're going to win. I don't really pay too much attention to who is the underdog, we've got to go out there and play on the field just like they do."

Although Harrison didn't put too much stock into playing as the underdog, center Luke Wypler emphasized his level of excitement to compete in this role.

"We love that," Wypler said. "I always love being the underdog in any situation. I think this team is going to thrive off of that too. I think has been (evident) the past few days in practice, you kind of tell the intensity is a little different, and the vibe is a little different. Everybody is kind of moving with a different sense of purpose.

"That underdog feeling is something that you can't make up in a regular season game, when we're playing against some teams, but now we really feel like we are and we have something to prove," he continued. "I think that's really kind of given everybody a little extra motivation."

As the 2022 Buckeyes have an opportunity to put themselves on the same pedestal as the 2002 and 2014 national championship teams, Day said he's looking forward to competing in the role of the underdog.

"Certainly, a lot of people counted us out and here we are," Day said. "I kind of like being in this role, but now we have to go do something with it. It doesn't mean anything if we don't do anything."